



U.S. Department of Justice

Civil Rights Division

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February 2008

I am pleased to invite you to an upcoming event hosted by the Justice Department on the topic of accessibility in the construction of multi-family housing. The program, which is free and includes breakfast, will be held from 8:30 to 11:00 a.m. on May 20, 2008, at the Marriott SpringHill Suites in downtown Seattle, Washington.

This meeting is part of a nationwide "Multi-Family Housing Access Forum" that the Civil Rights Division launched in 2005, bringing together developers and building professionals, government officials, and advocates for individuals with disabilities. Its purpose is to educate housing professionals on their legal obligations under the federal Fair Housing Act's accessibility requirements and to encourage dialogue among the participants. The program focuses on cooperative approaches to achieving compliance and celebrates partnerships that have produced accessible multi-family housing in which everyone profits – developers and consumers alike. More than 80 people attended our last event in Miami in November 2007.

As you may know, the Civil Rights Division enforces the Fair Housing Act. As a result of the Division's enforcement efforts since January 2001, those who designed and constructed multi-family housing that did not comply with the Act's accessibility requirements have had to pay millions of dollars to retrofit the properties and to compensate persons with disabilities who were injured by the violations. Although such lawsuits are a necessary part of our job, voluntary compliance at the planning stage is a much more cost-effective means of ensuring that the housing needs of persons with disabilities are met. It also makes good business sense. More than 50 million Americans, or 18 percent of our population, live with some type of disability, and together they control billions of dollars in discretionary spending. As our population ages and as the "baby boomer" generation retires, the need for accessible housing will only grow. Accordingly, our goal is to ensure the availability of accessible housing for persons with disabilities while introducing housing professionals to a market that is continually expanding to meet the needs of a large segment of our population. For additional information about our work, you can go to www.usdoj.gov/fairhousing.

To confirm your attendance, please send an email with your name (and the names of any attendees from your office), along with your contact information, to accessforum@usdoj.gov. Should you have any questions about the meeting or wish to discuss any accessibility services you may need, please send an email to the same address, and someone from the Housing and Civil Enforcement Section of the Civil Rights Division will respond promptly. The Marriott SpringHill Suites is located at 1800 Yale Avenue, Seattle, Washington, and its phone number is (206) 254-0500. <http://www.usdoj.gov/fairhousing>. Please also let us know of colleagues who may be interested in the Forum.

I view this program as a tremendous opportunity. Bringing together business, government, and disability rights leaders to think creatively will help fulfill the Fair Housing Act's promise of accessible housing. I look forward to your participation in this important meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Grace Chung Becker". The signature is fluid and elegant, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Grace Chung Becker
Acting Assistant Attorney General